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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: TIBET AND TAIWAN'S PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

¶11. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused news coverage March 19 on the two presidential candidates' responses to Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao's comment Tuesday on the demonstrations in Tibet; on the USS Kitty Hawk leaving its home base at Yokosuka, Japan Tuesday and its current whereabouts; and on the U.S. Federal Reserve Board's moves Tuesday to resolve the U.S. financial crisis. Almost all papers reported on AIT Taipei Director Stephen Young's call on DPP presidential candidate Frank Hsieh Tuesday, in which Hsieh said he will not use the UN referendum as a basis to change the status quo or move toward de jure Taiwan independence.

¶12. In terms of editorials and commentaries, an editorial in the pro-independence "Liberty Times" used China's suppression of Tibet to call on the voters to support the UN referenda and support Taiwan's democracy. A "Liberty Times" column said Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao's comment Tuesday slapped Ma hard in the face. An editorial in the pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News" also chimed in by saying that the crisis in Tibet exposes the danger of the 'One-China' principle. A column in the pro-unification "United Daily News," however, said Taiwan is different from Tibet in the way that the Taiwan people can use their votes to decide on their future. A column in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" also commented on Tibet's demonstrations, saying that Tibet just wants to remind the world that they are not subject to China's governance and that they need more freedom of religion and human rights. End summary.

A) "In Support of Taiwan and Democracy, Everyone Should Support the UN Referenda on Taiwan's UN Membership"

The pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 720,000] editorialized (3/19):

"... One can say that on March 22, in addition to the theme of voting for either the Hsieh-Su ticket or the Ma-Siew ticket, we have to pay attention to a more sublime theme: namely, to support Taiwan and to support democracy. The [DPP] referendum on Taiwan's bid to join the UN has collected the signatures of two million Taiwan people, while the [KMT] referendum on the island's bid to re-join the UN has also gathered signatures of one and a half million Taiwan people. When compared with the fact that more than 80 percent of the Taiwan public supported the government to submit its application for UN membership, it is certain that at least 3.5 million out of the 23 million of the Taiwan people will support the UN referenda on Taiwan's UN membership. [Ed. Note: this assumes no double-counting, as some people could have signed for both referenda.] The only test [for the island] now will be whether the Taiwan people will turn their belief into action and vote to pass the two UN referenda on March 22 in order for the whole world to hear clearly the Taiwan people's voice in seeking the UN membership.

"In particular, China's crackdown on the demonstrations in Tibet has

drawn unanimous condemnation from the international community. The international climate now is already quite different from that when China started to threaten and lure other countries to oppose Taiwan's holding of the UN referenda. At this moment, should the two referenda get passed on March 22, or at least one is passed, the international community will surely be able to realize deeply the Taiwan people's determination to say no to China. ...

"Taiwan is a democratic country whose future should be decided by the 23 million people on the island, definitely not by 'the entire Chinese people, including the Taiwan people' as emphasized by [Chinese Premier] Wen Jiabao. Tibet is currently part of China, and when China sent its troops to suppress demonstrations in Tibet, the best the international community can do is to condemn China. Taiwan is not a normal member in the international community, nor is it a UN member, so its situation in the international community is very isolated. As a result, in wake of the passionate campaign activities on March 16, all voters must clearly recognize that, when they select a president who really cares for Taiwan, they have to give full support for the two UN referenda. This is the true meaning of supporting Taiwan and democracy."

B) "Ma Gets Slapped in the Face by Wen Jiabao"

The "Free Talks" column in the pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 720,000] wrote (3/19):

".... Ma Ying-jeou criticized Frank Hsieh's statement the other day that 'Today's Tibet is tomorrow's Taiwan,' adding that Taiwan is not Tibet. But [Chinese Premier] Wen Jiabao's remarks in which he lied about [Beijing's] crackdown on Tibet on one hand and toughly opposed Taiwan's UN referenda on the other and said both Taiwan and Tibet are part of China were akin to slapping Ma hard in the face. The [UN] referenda are the guarantee for Taiwan to maintain its status as an independent sovereign state. If the KMT and Ma really realize their mistakes, they should try their best to push for the UN referenda to pass, starting today, or Ma's talk will simply be a tool to fool the voters!"

C) "Tibet Crisis Exposes 'One-China' Danger"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News" [circulation: 20,000] editorialized (3/19):

"The eruption of intensifying brutal suppression by Chinese armed police and military forces of protests in Tibet during the past week has exposed the danger posed to Taiwan by the acceptance by the opposition Kuomintang's presidential candidate Ma Ying-jeou. Beijing's repression and Wen's arrogant declarations have offered ample evidence that acceptance of any version of the "one China" principle, even Ma's delusion that his party's 'one China' is the Republic of China, will only result in Taiwan's 'subordination and suppression' to Beijing and put both Taiwan and Tibet on an 'equal footing' as 'integral parts' of China."

"Ma has yet to realize that his statement that 'the ROC is an independent democratic country and that Taiwan's future must be decided upon by the 23 million people of Taiwan without interference by the PRC' falls short of assuring the Taiwan people that they will not follow in the footsteps of Tibet. Although attempting to copycat the DPP's position in the May 1999 Resolution on the Future of Taiwan, Ma neither defines the relationship between Taiwan and the ROC and refuses to endorse the use of referendum to decide Taiwan's future and indeed on March 9 explicitly opposed Hsieh's call to put the question of entering into a 'cross-Strait common market' to our citizens in a referendum. In our view, the DPP's position that 'Taiwan is a sovereign and independent country,' whose official name is the Republic of China, and that only the 23 million Taiwan people can decide Taiwan's future through plebiscite, is indeed the only acceptable platform for a prospective national leader of Taiwan."

D) "Taiwan Is Not Tibet"

The "Black and White" column in the pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] noted (3/19):

".... The demonstrations in Tibet are divided into two parts: One is

headed by Dalai Lama, who advocates [Tibet's] autonomy and peace and does not call for its independence. The other, however, advocates Tibet's independence and does not rule out using violence. When Frank Hsieh mentioned 'the ideal jointly shared by the Tibetan and Taiwan people' [in his advertisement], we wonder which 'ideal' he was referring to? Is 'autonomy' an 'ideal for Taiwan'? Could it be that Hsieh is running for the 'special administrator of Taiwan' now?

[Ed. Note: analogy to the chief official in charge of Chinese-ruled Hong Kong] Then is 'Taiwan independence' an 'ideal for Taiwan'? Perhaps not, because even Hsieh said himself that 'Taiwan is an independent sovereign nation,' which should not and does not need to declare independence. Besides, the essential difference between Taiwan independence and Tibetan independence is that Tibet wants to be independent from the rule of the People's Republic of China, while the major objective of Taiwan independence is to overthrow the Republic of China. ...

"We are about to elect our own president. Is Tibet like us? We could use our votes to slash the seats of our corrupt ruling party in the legislative body to less than a quarter. Could Tibet do the same thing? We can also make a presidential candidate not trusted by our citizens fail to be elected. Could Tibet do that? We can vote to 'transfer the political power again.' Can Tibet do that as well? Yes, both the Taiwan and Tibetan people share a 'common ideal' -- namely, they do not accept 'unrighteous governance.' But [to achieve the ideal,] the Tibetans chose to burn cars and smash the shops, whereas the Taiwan people only need cast a vote on March 22!"

E) "Beijing Has a Beautiful Dream While Lhasa's Dream Is Broken"

James Tu, the President of mass-circulation "Apple Daily," [circulation: 520,000] noted in his weekly column (3/19):

"... Strictly speaking, the Western nations did not really offer much assistance for Tibet to seek independence, but a few diplomats did create much illusion for the Tibetans. When the Second World War ended, the United Kingdom quickly withdrew from its colonies in a panic, and the United States was then powerless to intervene [in the issue]. The battles between the KMT and the Chinese Communist Party quickly terminated the Nationalist Government's destiny in China, and it became irresistible for the People's Liberation Army to enter Tibet in 1950. Tibet used to be a link in the Cold War, but the United States, the Nationalist Government and India, which supported the Tibetan rebel army, only regarded the confrontation between Tibet and China as a pawn in the grand chess game of the Cold War. The Nationalist Government aside, even the United States had no intention of letting Tibet declare independence then. In the wake of President Nixon's visit to China, the worthless pawn, Tibet, was thus out of the game. ... What happened in Tibet this time is simply powerless protest from the Tibetans -- a fight between the weak and the strong. Their purpose is not to win something but to remind the people of the world that Tibet is not subject to China's governance, and that they need more freedom of religion and human rights. ..."

YOUNG